

have more to say about that even—tonight or tomorrow night?—tomorrow night at the retirement dinner.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Today, Mr. President, the Senate reaches an important milestone. We will confirm our 89th and 90th judicial nominees to serve lifetime appointments on the Federal bench. Starting at noon, the Senate will hold a total of four rollcall votes throughout the afternoon on the nominations of Frances Behm to the Eastern District of Michigan and Kelley Hodge to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

We are on pace to finish this year with more judges confirmed to the bench than were confirmed in the first 2 years of either of the previous two administrations. These nominees stand out not just in their numbers but also in their groundbreaking diversity. Almost 50 percent of the judges we have confirmed are women of color—50 percent. That has never happened before, and I am confident that a more diverse bench will go a long way in cultivating trust in our courts and in our democracy.

Just as important, once we confirm the nominations of Tamika Montgomery-Reeves and Dana Douglas very soon, the Senate will also have confirmed a total of 11 Black women to serve as appellate judges, by far the most ever under any single President.

Before President Biden, only 8 such nominees had been confirmed in total, and now, in our first 2 years, we are already on the brink of confirming 11.

Today, our Federal judiciary is far more balanced, far more diverse, and far more experienced than the one our country had 2 years ago. It is something we are very proud of. You can rest assured, Mr. President, that Senate Democrats are going to maintain this priority on judges as the 118th Congress begins next year.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on government funding, off the floor, negotiations continue between both parties on charting a path toward fully funding the government for the next fiscal year. I spent much of the day yesterday going from one meeting to the next, sitting down first with Leader McCONNELL and his team and then with Speaker PELOSI and her team, and I stayed on the phone throughout the evening as Senators worked to bridge the gap on funding.

We are working very hard on getting something done before the deadline, but there is a lot of negotiating left to do. Both sides understand that fully funding the government is extremely important and anything less risks harm to our troops and the Federal Government's ability to serve the public. We don't want to see that outcome so both sides must remain at the table and continue working.

Tomorrow, Senators will attend a classified briefing on the latest developments on the war in Ukraine. I hope it sinks in for all Members in attend-

ance just how critical U.S. aid has been, not just for our allies but for our own protection. I hope it sinks in that this is one of the most important reasons why we must reach an agreement.

It is not an easy process, but it is supremely important nonetheless. For the well-being of our troops, for the preservation of our national security, and for the tens of millions of Americans who look to the Federal Government for a wide range of basic services, Democrats and Republicans must work together to fully fund the Federal Government.

CHIPS AND SCIENCE ACT

Mr. President, now on CHIPS and Science, today, President Biden will be in Arizona to visit the construction site for what will become one of the largest chip manufacturing plants in America. What was originally announced to be a \$12 billion investment will now be a \$40 billion project, with the first chip fab set to open a year from now.

This is one of the highly visible examples of how the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act is already paying dividends for the economy, for job creators, and for American workers. It is a good sign for a new age of chip manufacturing in this country.

We used to lead the world in making microchips, and thanks to the CHIPS and Science Act, we are already seeing the types of investments that will make America a major hub—the major hub, hopefully—for chip manufacturing once again.

The construction site that President Biden visits today is just one example of some very exciting activity happening all across the country. In my home State of New York, Micron has pledged up to \$100 billion over the next two decades to build state-of-the-art semiconductor fabs in New York. Another major company, GlobalFoundries, has announced they will build a second fab in the Albany region of Upstate New York.

Of course, the benefits extend across America. We are seeing chipmakers announce multibillion-dollar investments in States ranging from Ohio to Colorado, to Texas, to Arizona—the Arizona one MARK KELLY did a great job of championing—to Idaho. In nearly all cases, executives have explicitly cited the passage of CHIPS and Science as a major factor in their decision to build big in America.

Though these many investments range in size and type, the bottom line on CHIPS and Science is this: more American jobs, increased American manufacturing, a stronger American economy in the long run. This bill is about innovating and building the future in the United States, not in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

As always, I thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who pushed this bill over the finish line. We are already reaping the immense benefits, and there will be many more to come.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY

Mr. President, before I conclude, I want to acknowledge that this is a solemn and special day here at the Capitol. Later this morning, congressional leadership will gather to award the Congressional Gold Medal in honor of the brave men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department who defended the Capitol on January 6.

On that day, democracy faced maximum danger. These heroes responded with maximum valor, and all of us in the Senate and across the Capitol Complex are forever—forever—in their debt.

I will have more to say when I speak this morning at the Rotunda, but for now, I want to say thank you to Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT, the chair and ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee, who worked together on legislation to award the gold medal to these highly worthy public servants. This award would not be possible without the work of Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT, and I commend them for their work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, well, here we are, again, into the month of December with crucial business unfinished. Republicans spent months urging the Democratic majority not to neglect this year's National Defense Authorization Act, not to leave our Armed Forces to the last minute.

Five months ago, I called on our colleagues to process the Defense bill as soon as possible; but, instead, the majority has prioritized not just gigantic partisan spending sprees, but also a parade of mid-level nominations.

The Democratic leader didn't even bring a Senate NDAA to the floor, forcing Senators REED and INHOFE to conduct an informal conference with the House with a weakened hand. When the Republicans controlled the government, we put our servicemembers first.

In 2017, the Senate passed our version of NDAA in September, and we had voice-voted the conference report by Thanksgiving. In 2018, the Republican Senate was completely finished with NDAA by early August. But on Democrats' watch, the Senate's schedule has not matched the Nation's needs. We have spent time on less important matters while both the authorization and funding for our servicemembers have languished until the eleventh hour.

Even now—even now—House and Senate Democrats are still obstructing

efforts to close out the NDAA by trying to jam in unrelated items with no relationship whatsoever to defense. We are talking about a grab bag of miscellaneous pet priorities—like making our financial system more sympathetic to illegal drugs or the phony partisan-permitting reform in-name-only language that has already failed to pass the Senate earlier this year.

If Democrats wanted these controversial items so badly, they had 2 years to move them across the floor. Heck, they could have scheduled those matters for votes this week. But, no, we are doing more mid-level nominations while Democrats keep half-threatening to take our Armed Forces hostage over these extraneous matters.

So there is an old saying that goes “Poor planning on your part does not necessitate an emergency on the part of other people.” The Democrats’ failure to plan ahead for unrelated liberal pet priorities should not be creating uncertainty and confusion for the brave servicemembers who keep us safe.

My colleagues across the aisle need to cut their unrelated hostage-taking and put a bipartisan NDAA on the floor.

TRIBUTE TO ROY BLUNT

Mr. President, now, on another matter, my friend and our distinguished colleague ROY BLUNT is one of us whose political careers began at the most local level. As a 20-something-year-old county clerk, ROY’s career in government required real hands-on public service right from the beginning. Fortunately, hard work and rolled-up sleeves weren’t foreign concepts for ROY. After all, before our friend became the first in his family to finish college, he grew up on a dairy farm.

And for decades now, that doggedness and persistence have served ROY’s neighbors exceptionally well. Green County’s young clerk, a former high school history teacher, fell short in his first campaign for higher statewide office. But a few years later, he handily became the first Republican Secretary of State Missouri had seen in half a century. After 8 years there and then 4 as a university president, ROY was already a seasoned veteran, firing on all cylinders, when he arrives in the House of Representatives in 1997.

Little wonder that, after just three terms, ROY became the newest representative to be voted House majority whip in 80 years. So, clearly, ROY had a big-time reputation for getting things done before he moved across the rotunda here to the Senate. When he won his election in 2010, all his colleagues knew our team was getting an all-star.

And, sure enough, in 6 years from freshman status to House leadership, he set a modern land speed record on that side of the Capitol. Then over here, ROY broke the sound barrier. He joined our conference’s leadership team 1 year after he became a Senator.

The record of accomplishments ROY has racked up reflects the fusion of

focus, detail-mindedness, and a rare knack for broader strategy and management. Time after time, Senator BLUNT has thrown himself into the weeds of policy, achieved total fluency in the details, and then climbed back up to 30,000 feet to make a strategic decision that would actually move the ball down the field.

Case in point: I believe ROY is the only Rules Committee chair in history to have actually served as his State’s top elections official. He knows the ins and outs of voting issues as well as anyone. He knows that the Federal role in our elections is both important but also very limited. He understands the big picture, the fine details, and everything in between.

The leaders of Rules also have huge ceremonial duties as the Capitol organizes the Presidential Inauguration every 4 years.

I have it on good authority that in both 2017 and 2021, when ROY headed up the ceremonies, our resident history buff handwrote every word of his speeches himself, longhand—names, dates, historical references, quotations, all straight from his pen, and it all passed his team’s careful fact-checking without a drop of red ink.

Now, those ceremonial duties bear mentioning, in part because taking center stage is such a departure from the way ROY normally tackles his business. Working methodically and diligently, building consensus behind the scenes, Missouri’s senior Senator has steered hundreds of millions of dollars toward improving transportation infrastructure at the crossroads of the American heartland.

He has reached across the aisle repeatedly to improve workforce development for American veterans. He has worked tirelessly to protect the integrity of our election systems. And perhaps most important of all, ROY has had a direct, generational impact on the future of cutting-edge American medicine. He spent years—years—building the transformational new consensus that became the Excellence in Mental Health Act.

His work to equip researchers to tackle rare diseases helped pour the foundation for the 21st Century Cures Act. At the National Institutes of Health, ROY BLUNT’s name is literally on the door of the signature initiative he championed to help the millions of Americans affected by dementia.

Time and time again, our capable and trusted colleague has wound up in the middle of high-stakes, high-profile work; yet ROY remains the same humble and approachable Show-Me Stater who first got into this business to help his neighbors.

These are qualities ROY shares with fellow distinguished Missourians who preceded him. Ever the historian, our colleague has regaled guests with the history of his Senate office suite, which once belonged to Harry Truman both as a Senator and even including Truman’s brief spell as Vice President.

Apparently, Truman came back personally to collect his things and finish moving out after he had already become the Commander in Chief.

But history isn’t the only subject where this former teacher still administers pop quizzes. ROY’s staff tell fondly how their boss is liable to walk into their offices at any time and simply inquire: So, what do you know? That one signature query captures ROY so well: the high standards, the curiosity, the restless energy to find the next big project that will make a difference. These qualities have made ROY one of the best the Senate has ever had at sniffing out common ground and delivering outcomes.

But legislation isn’t the only area where our friend’s nose-to-the-grindstone spirit pays dividends. For example, I am not sure what ROY has planned for his next chapter, but given his penchant for spending Saturdays walking the aisles at Home Depot and knocking out home improvement projects, I give him about 2 weeks before there won’t be one leaky faucet or rusted hinge within a three-mile radius of ROY and Abby’s place.

We know our friend much too well to predict that he will follow 14 general election victories by kicking back and taking it easy.

But, I suspect, ROY sure won’t mind the extra time with Abby and seeing more of Matt, Amy, Andrew, Charlie, and his grandkids as well.

So on behalf of all his friends here in the Senate and on behalf of the country, I thank my friend, the senior Senator from Missouri, for his years of outstanding service.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

MR. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to thank my good friend Senator MCCONNELL for his comments this morning, and I have reserved some time this afternoon for what would be my official farewell address in the Senate.

But as it relates to our leader, Mr. MCCONNELL, he and I were whips—when I was a whip in the House, he was a whip in the Senate. We met every week. We have had a long and close relationship. I am grateful for his advice, his friendship, and his comments today. Thank you.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, we will be losing several members to retirement at the end of this year, including my friend ROY BLUNT.

ROY and I have served together for the majority of my time in the Senate, and I also served with him for several years in the House of Representatives.

We started in the House at the same time, and we became friends right away. Our wives have become friends as well through the years, and it has been a joy over the years to host ROY and Abby in South Dakota, along with their son Charlie, and to visit them in Missouri. On a personal level, I am going to miss ROY a lot, and the Senate